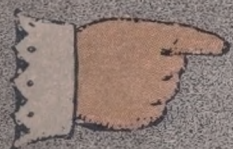


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THE BIG FAMILY

and their Good Times

by

John Rae





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The BIG Family



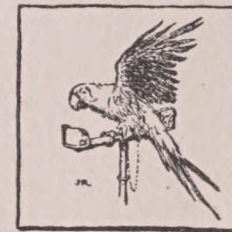
The BIG Family

and Their Good Times

Verses and Pictures

By

John Rae



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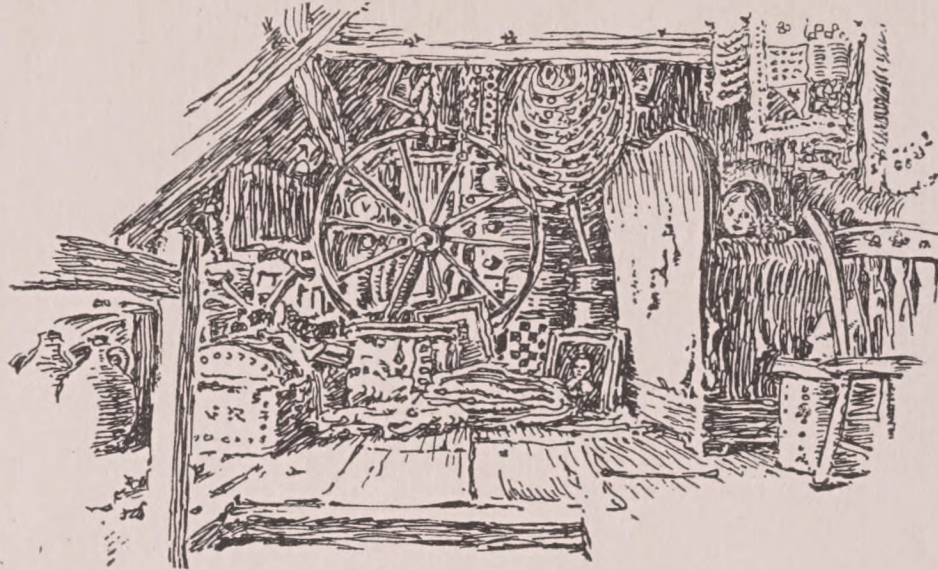
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This
Book
is dedicated to
all
the Big Families
in
the
whole
World



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The BIG Family

PART ONE



Old fashioned "folks" and what
is more,
The kind you'd like to have
next door.

THERE'S nothing I like better than to hear my Great-aunt Prue
Tell of the times when she was small and lived at "Pleasant View."
The place was rightly named—their view was what a view *should* be,
The river and the village and, way off, the blue, blue sea!
I've drawn a picture of the house,—that *was* a *Home*,—heigh-ho!
I often wish that I'd lived there back in the long ago.
I'll try to tell you (if you like to hear things told in rhymes)
What Great-aunt Prue tells me, *all true*, about the happy times
That fine big fam'ly used to have—let's see, there were eleven:
The grown folks numbered four in all, the children they were seven.
Brothers and Sisters! Seems to me no child can have too
many,
"The more the merrier." And *think*!—some children
haven't *any*!
In those old days I'll tell about—p'rhaps sixty years
ago—
That fam'ly wasn't thought so big as 'twould be now,
you know.





I'll show them all just as they were when Great-aunt Prue was eight!
Or thereabouts, and that was—but why bother with the date?

The MOTHER, Mrs. Smiley,—folks all called her “Mother Smile,”—
(To tell how wonderful she was would take too long a while,



And so I'll simply say that she was most like yours or mine!)
The FATHER was a doctor—doctor-fathers are just fine.
And UNCLE NATHAN—my weak words can't ever picture *him*—
Ship-builder! (Once was captain of the schooner “Sally Skimm.”)
He called the children “mates”—made toys! I'm sadly certain that
Uncles can't whittle nowadays, alas, like Uncle Nat.



Some children haven't any!

Out in the shallow brook he'd built a "good ship" for the "mates,"
 "The *finest playhouse*—yes, siree—in the *United States*."

A tiny cabin and *two* masts, gangplank to shore! What fun!
 And *bunks* for almost every child—the twins, of course, shared one.
 They named their boat the *Buccaneer*—she flew the skull and bones.
 And Cap'n Dan belayed the crew in fierce commanding tones.
 Had I possessed when I was small a place for play like that,
 My joy would have been quite complete!—*I had no Uncle Nat!*

AUNT FAN was then still "fancy free,"—she had but turned
 nineteen,

Her hair was brown, her eyes were blue as summer skies serene.

And she could play and sing and paint, and *make*
wax flowers too!

The children thought her perfect, *quite*—and so did
 Ezra True.

And if daguerreotypes don't lie I can't blame neigh-
 bor Ez, not I.

(Most of these little pictures, dear, were made, I must
 confess,

From hasty sketches by Aunt Fan.) I found her
 sketch book—yes—

Up in the attic—how it poured that autumn after-
 noon!

I also found her diary, marked Eighteen-fifty—June.



Uncles can't whittle nowadays, alas like Uncle Nat



*Now come the children: they were called
by some "the Seven Smiles"—
To find more huggable you'd have to hunt
a hundred miles.
(I love these children just as if they were
my very own.*

And as my rhymings run along you'll see that plainly shown.)

First "WEE-WEE" comes—there always *was* a baby in *that* house.

This one was sweet as any rose and quiet as a mouse.

THE TWINS! Their real names I've forgot—all called them "One and T'other."

Quiet as mice? No *they* were *not*; not they. Somehow or other

They managed almost every day, those two, to fall down-stairs;

In double trouble all the time they seemed, from dawn till prayers.

TOBIAS was the next in line, of course, they called him "Tubby"

Because, though not exactly *fat*, this five-year-old *was* chubby.

Quaint JANEY-ANN—*she* might have stepped from an old story book.

(Some children, though, are not quite so—well, saintly as they look.)

You'd never think,—how often one a wrong impression gets!—

That Janey-Ann could "kick the pan" or tear her pantalets.

But still she was the dearest child that ever stubbed a toe,

"Our little Jane." Don't I just wish I had one like her though!

I always like to hear—don't you?—all children's ages told,

Well, now, let's see—it seems to me Jane-Ann was six years old.



Wax flowers



There always was a baby, etc.

PRUDENCE was eight; her hair was straight; for short they called her Prue;
She seemed to live in "Wonderland"—looked quite like "Alice," too.

Her favorite game was "Let's pretend." She's *still* a child *inside*.

I guess she never *did* grow up, she couldn't if she tried.

Although she's now a real great-aunt she has the best of times—

And *how* it pleased the dear to hear her mem'ries put 'to rhymes!

DAN was the oldest, "nigh a man"—as he said, "most eleven."

You know what boys of *that* age are, it seems to me that heaven
Will be a sleepy sort of place without a few just *boys*
To add to music of the spheres a little *earthly noise*!

And Dan was every inch just boy; he'd great ambitions, too,
He hoped some day he might command a 40 frigate's crew,
And *then*—beware, O smuggler bold or Chinese pirate junk!—
The bravest of the brave, *he'd* be—he *once had caught a skunk*!

* * * * *



Not quite so—

THE PETS—of course there was a horse; there also
was a *pony*,
They wouldn't have sold "Dear old Dot"—not for a lot
of money.
And "Tricks," the kind of dog *you* like, a fearless little
fellow;
His heart was right, his soul was white, his pedigree
was "yellow."



"Saintly" as they look

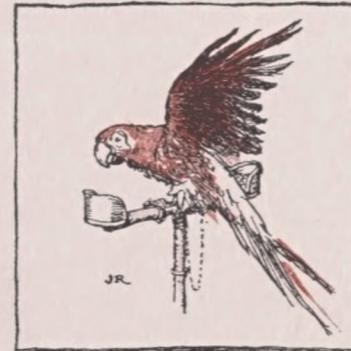
Then the poll-parrot—Uncle Nat had brought, so I had heard,
From some mysterious tropic land this bright-hued talking bird.
(This Pretty Polly once became the talk of all the town;
I'll tell you *some* day what she did *the night the barn burned down.*)



The Horse



The Dog



The Parrot



The Pony

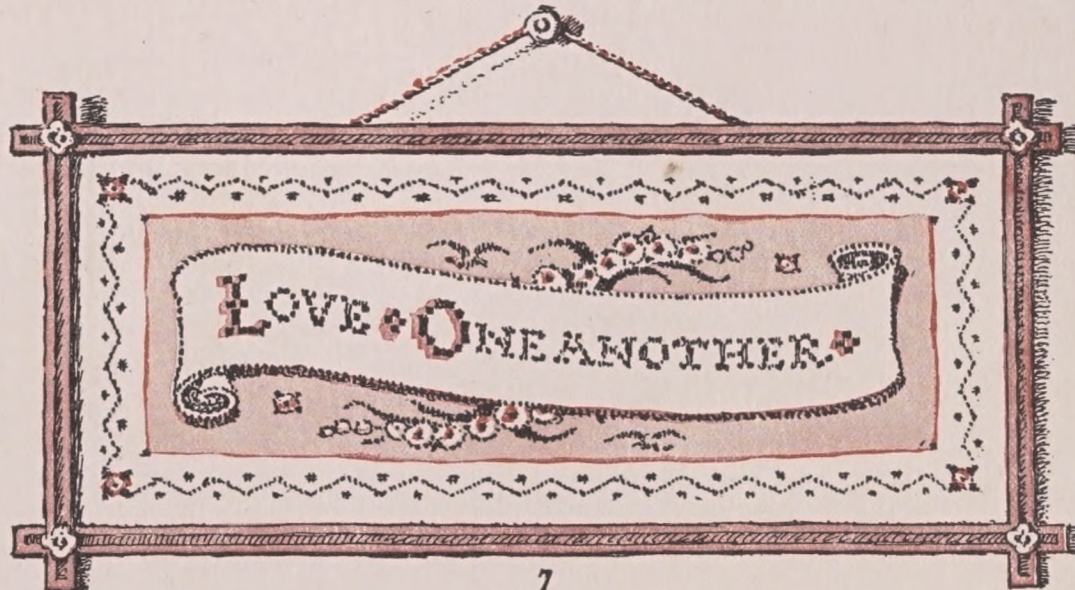


I hope you like this family, these "Smiles" of
Pleasant View,
And that you want to hear sometime about
their doings too.
You see, *this* time it took so long to introduce
each one
That bedtime, dear, is drawing near and we're
but well begun.



Worked by Aunt Fan

Just one thing more—above the door from sitting-room to hall
There hung a framed embroidered scroll; it could be seen by all.
This was the motto of "the Smiles"—picked out I'm sure by Mother—
Worked by Aunt Fan in red and tan; it said: "*Love One Another.*"



PART TWO



*They go to grandpa's for Thanksgiving:
What fun they had, those days, just living!*



TELL you a story? Let me see, "A *true* one, too," you say?
I'll tell you how the Smileys spent one good Thanksgiving Day,
And when I've finished I'm quite sure you'll all of you declare
You'd like to've been along yourselves the fun and feast to share.

To Grandpa Smiley's they had planned as usual to go.

"Now," said the children one and all, "if *only* it would snow!"

And, sure enough, the afternoon before the festal day

The first flakes fell; folks could foretell good sleighing. Hip-hooray!!!!

It snowed all night; the children—why, they scarcely slept a wink!


They dressed and had their breakfast all by lamplight. Only think!

They got a very early start, for in
that way they might

Crowd in a few more happy hours
before the fall of night.

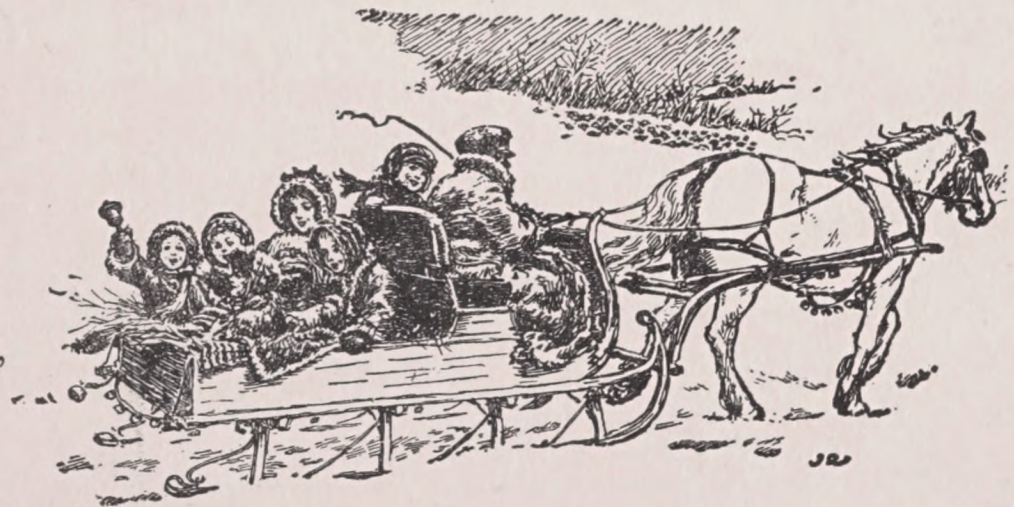
Father and Mother Smiley took the
little basket sleigh;

The baby went, of course, with them.

The others? Look this way 

The picture shows them in the pung,
a load! Land sakes alive!

Six rosy children, sweet Aunt Fan,
and Uncle Nat to drive.





The Twins are there and Tubby too, and Prue
and Janey-Ann,
And, sitting on the driver's seat with Uncle,
merry Dan.
The pung was warm with springy hay, rag rugs
and buffaloes,
And every cosy passenger was muffled to the
nose.

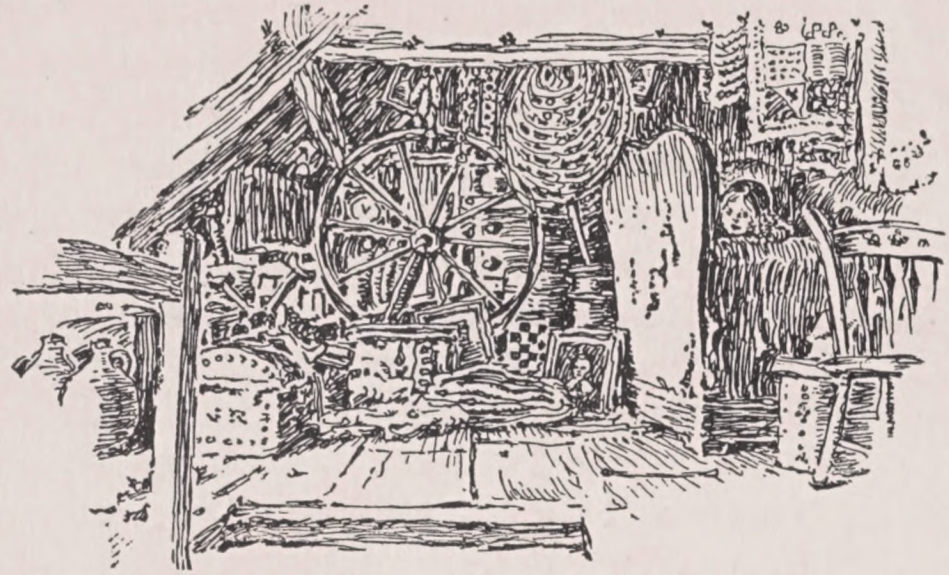


With jingling bells they started off just as the east grew bright,
Passed the old tollgate by the time 'twas really broad daylight.
There isn't time to tell you all they saw upon the way
And all they did. You'll have to just imagine. Anyway
It was a jolly old sleigh ride—no great adventures met—
(Near Hilltown, though, in drifted snow, they did *almost* upset!)

Good Gramp' and Gran'ma Smiley lived about twelve miles away,
Past Greenfield, on the River Road. Fine country that, they say.
The trip, of course, seemed short indeed—how fast the minutes flew!
They jogged through Allen's Woods and soon the house came into view.
A big, red, rambling, home-like house; the door soon opened wide
And Gramp' and Gran'ma, sweet old souls, stood smiling just inside.
"Whoa, boy! Who-o-o-o up!" The jingling ceased, all scrambled to the ground,
And sudden noise of girls and boys then made that house resound.
In the big room birch logs blazed bright; oh, happy folks were those
Who crowded round the fire that day to warm their chilly toes.



Mother and Auntie Fan soon went to
help prepare the feast
(Sounds from the kitchen issuing were
promising at least!)
Sweet odors floated through the house.
How hard to wait and sniff,
After you've caught that appetizing pie
and turkey whiff!
Said Gramp', "That bird's so big seems
's if to roast him'd take a week.
'Twould make the time seem shorter if
you'd all play hide-an'-seek."

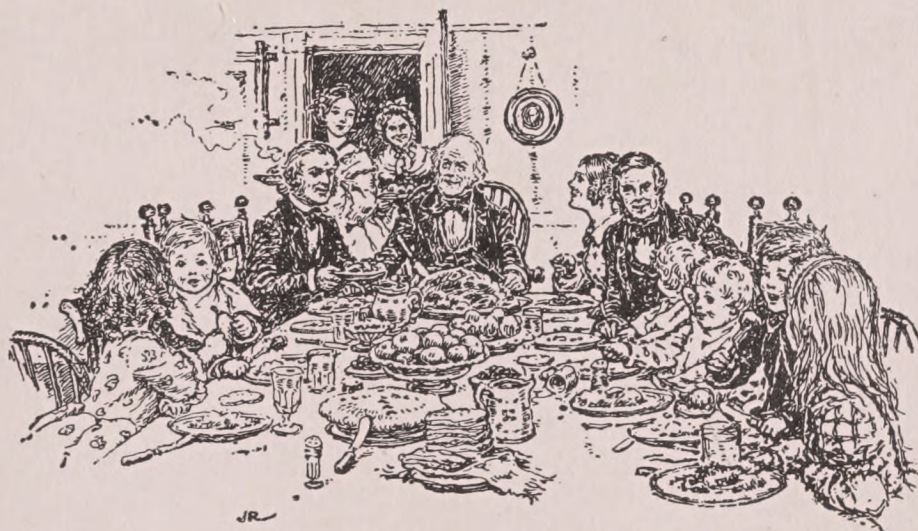


They counted out and Prue was "It." All ran to hide away.
Old-timey houses were just built for hide-an'-seek, I'd say.
Such corners dark, and cubbyholes, the wood-house chamber—you
Say that's the best place of them all to hide; Jane thought so, too;
There, rolled in an old patchwork quilt, she hid—the little sinner!
They didn't find her till 'twas time to come—yum! yum!!—to dinner.
"Where are the Twins? It's dinner time." Hark!—from the barn a wail:
(To get in trouble of some sort Twins never seem to fail.)
When found at last they were stuck fast; they both had tried to crawl
Into an empty barrel that was just one size too small.

Gramp' asked the blessing—"Thankful hearts we bring Thee, Lord, for this
Thy bounty. Bless all here this day and absent ones we miss;



Keep all our sons and daughters, and their fam'lies too, we pray,
Though scattered far, oh, bring them near in loving thought to-day."
The dinner? I can only give a very faint idea
Of that fine old Thanksgiving feast; the thought of that good cheer
Makes me as hungry as a shark, although I don't suppose
That sharks would care for punkin pies and such, but then—who knows?



I think the best thing I can do's to tell what
Tubby said,
When after his third piece of pie he sadly
shook his head—
There still remained great heaps of nuts
and maple sugar hummocks
And apples, too—he sighed, "I do just *wish*
I had six stummocks."
After the dinner, as they sat about a cheery
blaze
Gramp' told how he'd seen Indians back in
the early days;

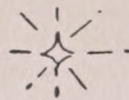
How, near the little frontier town where then his folks were living,
They often shot, as like as not, wild turkey for Thanksgiving.
Then Gran'ma showed the wish-bone doll that long ago she'd made
For Father's little sister Sal, and told how they had played—
"Sally and Nat and Father, too—right in this very room,
When Uncle Nat was four years old, 'bout knee-high to a broom;



He looked like Tubby does right now, and, Dan, I do declare,
To look at you I'd say that 'twas your father sitting there!"
And so, with pleasant family talk—and now and then a tune
Upon the old melodeon—they passed the afternoon.
Before they bundled up to go they all joined in and sang
"Praise God from whom all blessings flow." How sweet their voices rang!
I'd like to've heard Gramp's hearty, loud "Amen!" 'twas *fine*, they say—
Somehow a perfect ending for their happy holiday.



PART THREE



*I'll tell in pictures and in rhyme
Just what they did at Christmas time.*



CHRISTMAS is nearly here, just think! You've probably begun
To count like this: "Just five days more," then "Four"—
"Three"—"Two" and "One,"

Just as *they* did in Gran'ma's day, these happy children who,
'Cept for their clothes, were, goodness knows, about the same as you
As for the little Smileys, they could hardly eat their meals,
So full were they of thoughts of what was coming, and their squeals

And bursts of gay excitement seemed to liven every minute.
And, oh, so many things to do outside the house and in it!
Popcorn to pop and string, of course, and apples red to glaze,
And silver-paper chains to make. You see, in those old days
Folks made most every thing themselves to trim the Christmas tree.
'Twas better fun that way, perhaps—at least, seems so to me.
And mystery was in the air, cries of "Don't come in here!"
And hid in closet corners dark were bulging bundles queer.

Day before Christmas came, and there was still a lot to do,
What busy bustling everywhere! (fine, bright, white day 'twas, too.)
Aunt Fan made candy, many kinds, from breakfast time till noon,
And chubby Tubby waited round to lick the stirring spoon.
Prudence and Janey-Ann hung wreaths; with cheer that house just glowed.
Mother, of course, was everywhere; the Baby kicked and crowed.



The Twins were busy as two bees, a-helping everyone.
Though mostly underfoot, they too, I'm sure, enjoyed
the fun.

Aunt Fan and Mother trimmed the Tree, while
Father in the sleigh

Went to get little Orphan Jim, who was with them to
stay

That night and all the next day, too, to share their
Christmas joys,

The Tree and all that with it went—girls, boys, and
toys and noise.

For otherwise Jim could expect but little Christmas
fun—

(The uncle old with whom he lived was such a crab-
bed one.)



When they returned all were surprised though acting's if they knew—
For Father'd brought not only Jim, but Jim's glum uncle too!

"They're lighting up the Tree!!" You know the feeling—"goosey-skin"—

When Mother from the sitting-room calls, "Children, all come in!"

You must know, too, that is, if you're a little girl or boy,

What met their eyes. Oh, Paradise! Oh, vision of pure joy!

I'll tell you now about the gifts; *I* always like to hear

What each one got; so, like as not, 'twill interest *you*, my dear,

To know the thing each one received that pleased him most, or her.



For Mother 'twas a tippet of the softest, brownest fur;
 For Father (doctors have to be outdoors in cold and storm)
 A cunning little charcoal stove to keep the sleigh-floor warm.
 "Polk's Favorite Songs," for sweet Aunt Fan, she tried them right away;
 Long wrister-mits for Uncle Nat, hand-knitted, brown and gray.
 Dan had a beautiful big knife, horn handle! shining blade!
 Prue, by a little bracelet with carnelians set, was made
 As happy as a child can be. Quaint Janey-Ann, the dear,
 Got what she begged for, real boys' skates, like
 Dan's; she thought it queer
 That Prue could like a bracelet best. Tubby?
 he had a sled.
 The Twins had little wagons, both alike—the
 wheels were red.
 Jim and his uncle, too, of course, had gifts like
 all the rest,
 That uncle really almost smiled, at least he did
 his best;
 He got a bright red handkerchief, and as for little
 Jim—
 You should have seen the clanking sword they
 buckled onto him.
 A collar, red, for Tricks the dog, a gay rosette for
 Dot,



Oh, vision of pure joy!



The pony. Tom, the old white horse, a brand-new harness got.

For Polly, Uncle Nat had made a beautiful new perch; Proud as a peacock Polly sat, "Like Mrs. Spriggs in church."

What romping fun for everyone! Oh, what a merry throng!

They played so hard that Orphan Jim was tuckered before long.

He curled up on a bearskin rug and fell asleep; I guess
Poor lonely Jim was just about worn out with happiness.
Then Father Smiley carried him—toys, bearskin rug and all—
And laid him in a trundle-bed up in the children's hall.

He dreamed that Santa Claus had come to take him for a ride,
And he had held the reins while old Saint Nick went down inside
Some chimney with his wondrous pack, when suddenly—Hi! Yi!
Those lively reindeers ran away, straight up into the sky!
There, many shining angels sang; each held a star to light
The way down to the snowy world, yet Jimmie felt no fright.



*suddenly—Hi! Yi!
Those lively reindeer ran away,
straight up into the sky!*





The reindeer stopped, the angels smiled the little boy to greet,
And one, who seemed to him a sort of Mother Angel sweet,
Said tenderly, "God bless you, dear"—and as these words she spoke,
Leaned down and kissed the little boy: then Orphan Jim awoke.

Was it a Christmas Angel who had kissed him? No, not quite,
But *almost*—Mother Smiley had come up to say, "Good-night."

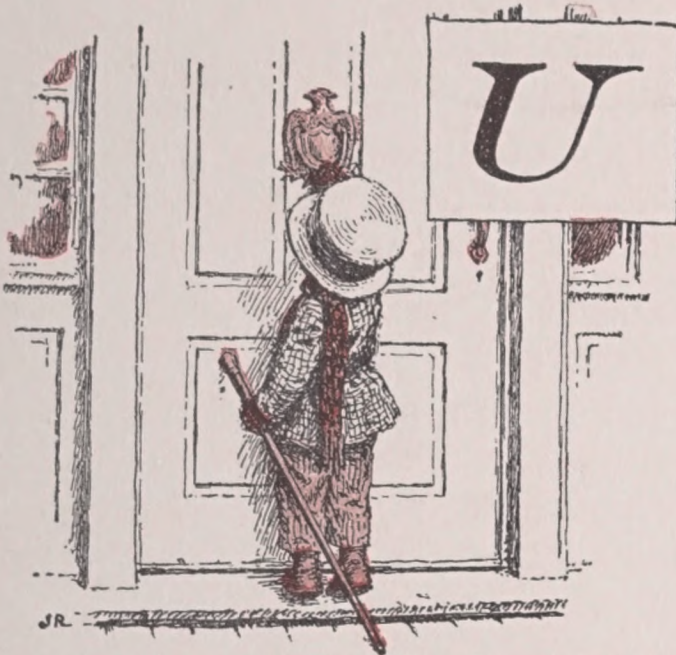


A Mother Angel sweet said
tenderly,
"God bless you, dear"

PART FOUR

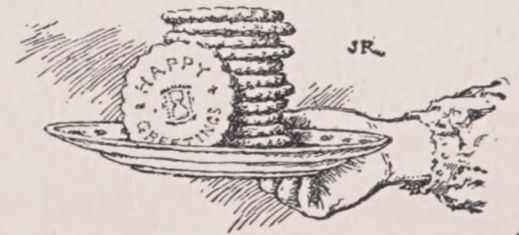


*This tells you how the Smileys small
Dressed up and made a New Year's call.*



PON the village 'neath the hill the Smileys' house
looked down,
They lived, as people used to say, way up on top
o' town.
The knockers on the village street resounded; every-
where
Gay shouts of "Happy New Year, Friend," rang
on the nipping air.
For on this day folks used to dress up in their best
and go
A-calling on their neighbors all—some still do so,
you know.

Dear Mother Smiley and Aunt Fan had baked the day before
Such stacks of pretty cakes—a kind folks don't make any more—
On each an hour glass was stamped, and "Happy Greetings," too.
Best cakes you ever ate! I wish I had some now, don't you?
Besides these old-time New Year's cakes for callers there would be
Big apples, nuts and hermit snaps, and cider, p'r'aps, or tea.
Mother and Father, Uncle too, had gone out in the sleigh
To make a call on Mrs. Hall who lived down Harbor way.
"Let us," said Prue, "go calling too. I'm sure I know just
how."
Said Tubby, "We'll get things to eat, so let's start out right now."





"Pretend," Prue said, "I'm Mrs. Brown, and, Tubby, you be Mister,
And Janey Ann will be Aunt Jess, my young unmarried sister.
The Twins can be our children two, if they'll be very good."
Those two, as solemn as young owls, both promised that they would.



Dan felt he was too old, of course, for
childish play like this.

(When we begin to feel grown-up what
merry times we miss!)

They rummaged round until they found
big shawls for Prue and Jane,
And bonnets. Look! a *great* tall hat for
Tubby, and a cane!

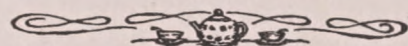
They tied long mufflers on the Twins, then started down the road.
One man who saw them said, "I surely thought I should explode!"
They'd planned to call upon the Trues, near neighbors, just below.
But as they neared Trues' gate a dog came out: he didn't know
The children in their trailing clothes. He showed his teeth and growled!
The children turned and flew for home; the Twins in terror howled.
Think what a sight. Those flapping shawls, and Tubby's stovepipe hat—
It really was remarkable how he hung on to that!
When they got home, quite out of breath (*how* those five children ran!),
They all decided that they'd simply call on Auntie Fan.
For she, they knew, had stayed at home, perhaps to mind the Baby
For Mother, or, as like as not, expecting callers maybe.



Their finery they straightened out, then knocked at the front door,
And Auntie opened it; she'd played this kind of game before,
So when she saw them she exclaimed, "How *are* you, Mrs. Brown?
A Happy New Year to you all. Please come in and sit down."
They all trailed in with curtsies, bows, and scrapes, that funny crew!
And Prue and Janey talked "polite," as they'd heard grown-folks do.
They called Aunt Fan "Miss Allen," and they hoped they found her well.
How was her little niece (Wee Wee), of whom they had heard tell?
And so forth. Auntie entered right into their calling game,
She brought the Baby down so that the Browns could all exclaim.
And entertained them prettily, and soon— What do you think?
She brought in heaps of New Year's cakes, and cambric tea to drink.
Tubby had acted very well, but when it came
to this
He almost sat on his tall hat in gas-tro-nom-ic
bliss!
Dan, who had said he was "too old for make-
believe—most 'leven—"
Was *not* too old for New Year's cakes; he
slipped in and ate seven!

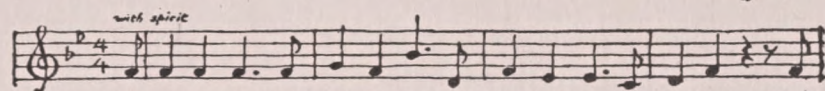


The parrot, seeing them all feast, cried, "Gi' me chaw terbaccer!"
'Twas Uncle Nat had taught her that, instead of "want a cracker."
When they had eaten *lots*, Prue said, polite as anything,
"We hear you've such a lovely voice, Miss Allen. Won't you sing?"

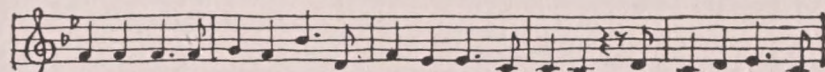


A CAT TALE

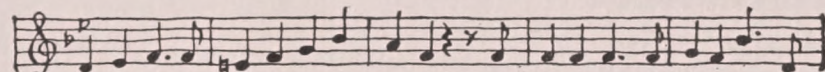
(Written by Aunt Fan for the children)



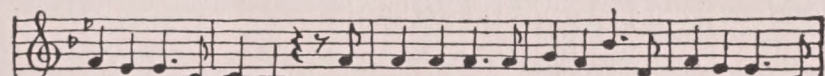
A cat went calling one fine day, she tried polite to be, sir. With



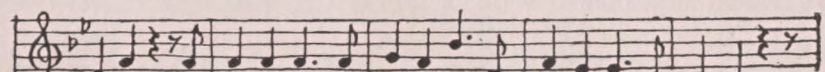
neighbors just across the way she sat a-drinking tea, sir. But as she sat a-



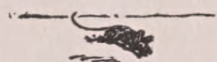
drinking tea, so lady, like—Oh law, sir! She spied a mouse: her tea went, youse! She



dropped her cup & saucer. And so you see a cat's a cat, whatever you may



say, sir: Now if you like my little song I'll sing again some day, Sir.



She mimicked deaf old Carrie Gaff
So well that Janey *had* to laugh.
Aunt Fan then sang a little song that
all the children knew;
She said, of course, that she was hoarse,
and wouldn't they sing, too?

Here are the words and melody
Easy as pie, as you can see.

Now while they sang this lively song
they didn't notice Tricks,
Their dog: he'd found the plate of cakes
and eaten five or six.
They finally spied him, though, and
then to save the cakes all flew,
They quite lost all their "comp'ny airs"
and manners, I tell you.
The dog, a cake still in his mouth,
dodged out into the hall,
Close followed by the children—'course
the Twins both had a fall.

The front door opened, Tricks escaped, the parents had returned,
And Uncle Nat. My, how they laughed and laughed when they all learned
About the stolen cakes, and when they saw the children's rigs!



Soon after neighbor True dropped in and Mr. Jabez Briggs.
Then off and on all afternoon, till darkness settled down,
The New Year's callers came: some drove way in from
Ferry Town.

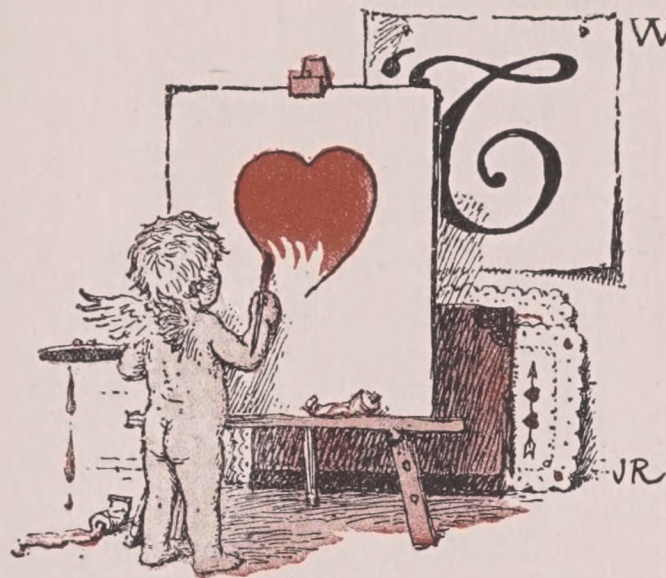
And as the last guests took their leave and "Happy New
Year" cried
Polly (she'd heard this all day long), "The same to you" replied.



PART FIVE



*This tells about the valentines they used to send
each other,
Especially about the one the children made for
Mother.*



WAS February*, and the snow lay deep upon the ground.

It made, each step one took in it, a crispy, squeaking sound.

About the Smileys' house and barn the drifts were just immense.

Why, there were places where you couldn't even see the fence!

The almanac said "very cold," and well indeed it might,

Even the river, past the bend, was frozen over, tight.
Coasting was fine: the hills were white as far as you could look—

Quite like this "winter scene" I found in an old story book.

The Smiley children'd just come in, their rosy cheeks aglow.
They'd been out playing with their sleds and building forts of snow,
And now sat round the Franklin stove while shoes and stockings dried.
(How warm and cozy 'twas indoors after the cold outside!)

"What shall we do till supper time?" said Jane. All looked at Prue:
She was the one who had ideas and thought of things to do.

* "Tho' February," Grandma says, "is cold and 'blow-your-nosey,'
Saint Valentine's Day warms it up and makes you feel real cozy."



"Now, day after to-morrow is Saint Valentine's," said she;
"We'd most forgot—let's see— Why not? Oh, listen! Why don't we—"
The rest she whispered; all approved her solemn, secret plan,



WINTER SCENE

The only one they told was
sweet, obliging Auntie
Fan;

She had to help. The scheme
was this—to make a
valentine

For Mother; of the little
verse each child should
write a line,

Then Auntie Fan could help
them draw the cupids,
doves, and darts.

"I choose to paint," cried
Janey quaint, "the red
upon the hearts."

They all trooped up to
Auntie's room so Moth-
er wouldn't see,

And set to work with might and main to write their poetry.
The Twins, of course, had to be helped—they scarce knew A B C's.
For Baby's line they put a kiss. Ah, clever poets these!
When, after many rubbing-outs, they'd finished, Auntie Fan



Got out her paint box and her pens and paper, then began
To draw and paint. The children crowded round so they could see—
I love to watch a person paint. Don't you? It seems to me
A brush is like a magic wand, for it makes things appear
From nowhere! 'Cross the paper soon flew chubby cupids dear,
Then doves and darts and punctured hearts Aunt Fan put in. "Take care!"
Cried Prue to Tubby, "don't you see your joggling Auntie's chair!"
The Twins squeezed nearer all the time, and finally upset
The painting water! Luckily 'twas just a rug got wet.

Well, when the lovely valentine was almost done, Aunt Fan
Let each one paint a heart bright red. "Mine's reddest!" shouted
Dan.



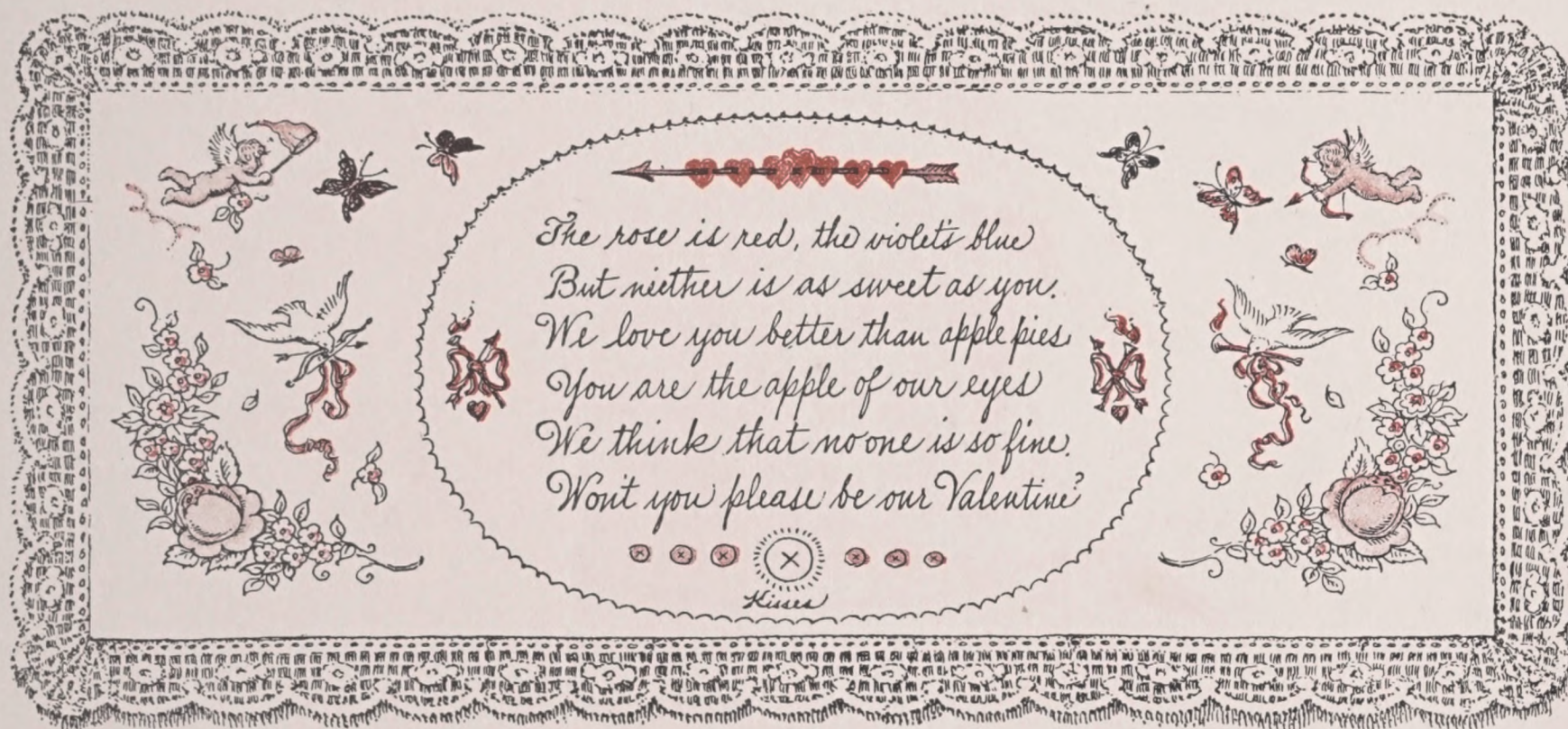
Then very neatly Prue wrote in—where Aunt had left a space—
Their lines of valentiney verse; then took some narrow lace
And pasted it around the edge. Like this. Well, did you ever!
For just a homemade valentine I'd call that pretty clever!

Of course when Valentine's Day came 'twas lots and lots of fun;

When Uncle Nat brought up the mail there was for every one
A valentine, or two or three; in all it seemed, well, dozens,
From loving friends and relatives, their uncles, aunts, and cousins.
(What dainty tokens some were, too, all lace and gilded vines—
You see, folks used to make a lot of sending valentines.)
Some were slipped in beneath the door, and many times that day
They spied the ones who'd left them, too, ere they could run away.



Sweet Auntie Fan got five or six. She blushed just like a rose,
For one she *knew* was from Ez True—how *did* she know, d'you s'pose?
When Mother Smiley opened hers, the children, merry crew,





Jumped up and down ecstatically, chanting, "Guess from who!"
Of course she guessed. It was the best, she said, she'd ever seen,
And in her eyes, ah, what a prize, indeed, it must have been.





*When you read this, I almost know
That sugaring you'll want to go.*



MARCH seems to some a dismal month, 'twixt
winter time and spring,
But children know that isn't so: for
instance, for one thing
The freezing nights and thawing noons
make coasting simply prime,
And towards the last part of the month
comes *maple sugar time!*

That's something *city* children miss.
Oh, isn't it too bad
All children cannot have the fun these
Smiley youngsters had!

One morning Dan came bursting in,
all breathlessly, to say,

"We're going to the sugar woods—get ready right away."

(Uncle was helping Henry Howe his maple trees to tap;

He'd said the children might come, too, that day, to help boil sap.)

In eager haste—no time to waste—they soon were ready, all.

"Here comes the sled!" cried Dan. They sped like lightning through the hall
And out the door. Along the road with plodding, clumsy tread,
A team of steaming oxen drew "Hen's" heavy hauling-sled.
Upon the sled a kettle stood, a monster kettle, too,
Like one some giant p'r'aps might use for making soup or stew.



The driver walked beside the team, a long stick in his hand.
Most of the children found a place on the big sled to stand.
A little sled they hitched behind—called it their "dory-boat"—
The Twins looked cozy tucked in that. (Each wore a bright red coat.)

Dan hopped into the kettle huge, pretending, all the trip,
That he was in what sailors call the "crow-nest" of a ship.
And when they'd see some other team, or even girl or boy,
He'd loudly shout like ship's look-out, "Sail ho!" or "ship ahoy!"
Yes, little Tricks, their dog, went too; he always was along.
(A crowd of children 'thout a dog to me seems, somehow,
wrong.)

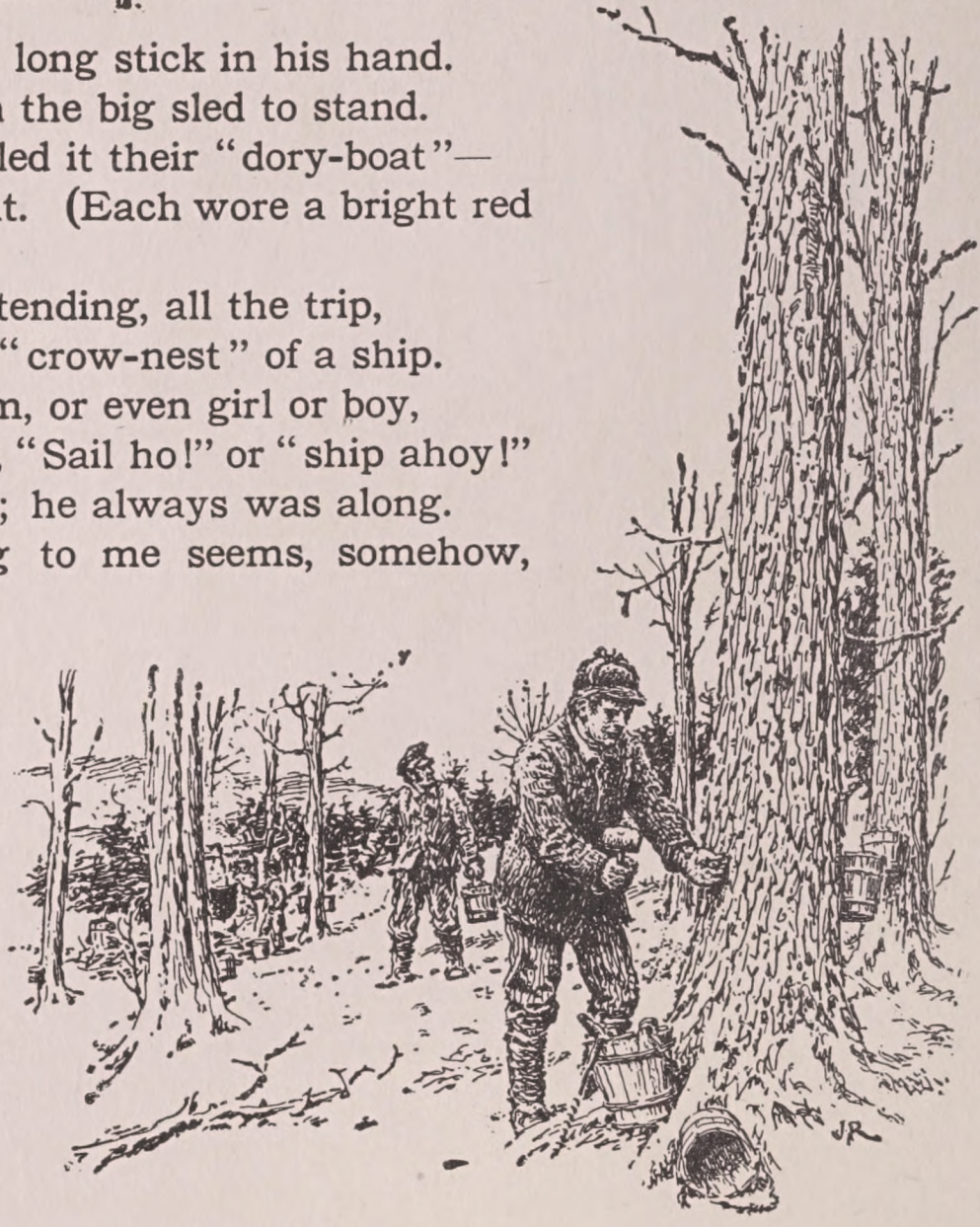
An ox-team, as you know, is slow:
small speed but lots of power.

So, though 'twas not two miles
away, it took them 'most an
hour

To reach Howe's sugar woods.
At last they got there. Uncle
Nat

Was chopping wood to build a fire;
he stopped and waved his hat.

A great log crane stood ready for
the kettle. Jonas True





Was bringing in a pail of sap. Now, in a word or two,
I'll tell how maple sugar's made—or was made years ago.
It's lot's of fun from first to last. Well, first of all, you know,
They whittle out some hollow plugs from slender elder stem,
Then in the sugar-maple trees bore holes, and into them
They stick the hollow elder spouts; the sap leaks out through these.
(The very early spring's the time they tap the maple trees.)
To catch the sap they hang a pail or bucket 'neath the spout;
As pails get full they empty them into a kettle stout.
This kettle boils for hours and hours above a roaring blaze.



(Over the woods at sugar time there hangs a
smoky haze.)
And as the syrup thicker grows they test it now
and then
By dropping some upon the snow to cool it off, and
when
It turns to sugar someone says "Hurrah, boys,
sugar's come!"

Then it is done, and everyone, of course,
must sample some.

The Smiley children'd planned to make
some sugar all themselves.

A little kettle they had brought, those
sweet-toothed, jolly elves,



Also some bread that they could spread with syrup—apples, too
A “sugar” picnic’s best of all. Now, just let me tell you
That when all morning you’ve been out, and worked and carried
wood,

And sniffed the boiling syrup—well, lunch tastes “tarnation” good!
While waiting for their sap to boil they made a snow man tall;
He seemed to guard the sugar woods, the owner of them all.
Majestic as some ancient prince or monarch of the past.

☞ Observe my picture. It’s a shame his statue couldn’t last*.



Tricks was their team—that clever dog
most anything could do—
He dragged a little loaded sled as Dan
had taught him to.
Prudence and Tubby tended fire, and
they and all the rest
Would every now and then spoon out
some syrup “just to test,”
So when ’twas really done—my land!
they’d eaten more than half!
At Tubby’s anxious, worried look how
Uncle Nat did laugh.
Well, luckily, enough was left to go
around, at least:

* Next day that snowman was a wreck. His downfall was complete.
Jane said “He was probably affected by the heat.”



The children all fell to and ate their long awaited feast.
And when at last all started home, so very full were they
Each felt that he or she would want no food for many a day.
The children, though, by supper time forgot they felt "chuck-full,"
Corn bread and baked potatoes tasted good as usual.
That very night a freshet came, which showed, for one sure thing,
The ice was breaking up at last and *winter'd changed to spring.*



PART SEVEN



*Kept in by rain this April day,
They cut out "actors for a play."*



MOTHER and Aunt were baking pies, and by the wood
box Prue

Was reading stories to the Twins and Tubby—I tell
you,

The kitchen is the finest room of all in rainy
weather: "

It has a cozy sort of smell that just draws folks
together.

Jane Ann, her small nose pressed against the
kitchen window pane,

Was watching rather mournfully the racing April rain.

But suddenly she brightened up—oh, wicked little Jane—

Opened the window, leaned way out, and called with might and main,

"Oh, Captain Green! Oh, Captain Green!!" Said Mother, "Why, how queer,
'Twas just a month ago he sailed away to stay a year!"

Now everyone liked Cap'n Green, so to the window
flew

Prudence and Tubby and the Twins, Mother and
Auntie, too.

(Uncle and Dan had heard her, too, out in the wagon
shed





Where they were painting the old shay's big wheels a fine, bright red.)
As you'd expect, the Twins most wrecked the big blue kitchen stool—
Jane's voice then rose in one long-drawn, triumphant "April Fool!"

When they got settled down again, Prue, searching through
her book

To find the place she'd lost, exclaimed, "A paper doll—just
look!"

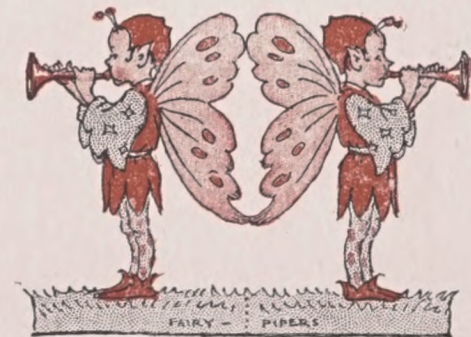
(Used as a bookmark probably.) "Why, good-land-sakes-
alive!"

Said Mother; "that's one Aunt Fan had when she was four
or five!"

This gave Aunt Fan a fine idea. "Now that the pies are
done,

Let's all make paper dolls," said she. "And wouldn't it be fun
To have a sort of little play—that's what I used to do—
With paper dolls for actors; we can take that story Prue
Just read, and use it for our play, 'The Fairies' April Fool.'"
It was a very simple tale from "Hours After School."

*The tale was this: One spring the Fairy Queen decided to
Just play a harmless joke upon some children that she knew.
She went to where the children lived, just at the peep of dawn,
And with her elf musicians, stood out on the dewy lawn.
These cunning fairy pipers played their sweetest magic tune,
That only children's ears can catch, at setting of the moon.*





*The children woke and all came out, then said the Fairy Queen,
 "Oh, follow me, my dears, and see what's growing on the green!"
 They hardly could believe their eyes when the town green they neared,
 For, though 'twas only April first, a tulip had appeared!
 But even as the boys and girls all rubbed their sleepy eyes,
 The tulip turned! 'Twas but an elf in flowery disguise!
 The fairies then were gone; but on the morning breezes cool
 The children heard faint laughter float, and cries of "April fool!"*



*They told their parents, but to them impossible it seemed;
 They smiled and said, with shake of head, "Tut, tut, you must have dreamed!"*



Scissors and paper, pencils, paints, they brought out right away,
 Soon all were busy helping make the actors for their play.
 Prue did the most, for she, you see, could draw quite well and
 paint.

Jane Ann cut out with careful snips the rows of children quaint.
*They folded strips in this way, so
 One cutting out completes a row.*



And Aunty helped them all, of course, and told them what to do,
The Tulip-Elf she made herself. I think he's fine. Don't you?



*The front and back are different, that's how he has to be,
So when he turns his back to you he is disguised, you see.
The paper "Parents" they cut out of "Godey's
Lady Book."*

➔ The Twins and Tubby colored them (with Mother's aid). Just look!

"This afternoon when Father comes," said Prue,
"we'll give the play."

The doctor-father'd gone to help some sick man
miles away.

That afternoon (the rain'd just stopped), 'twas half-
past three or four

When Dan, bedaubed with carriage-paint, popped
in the kitchen door,

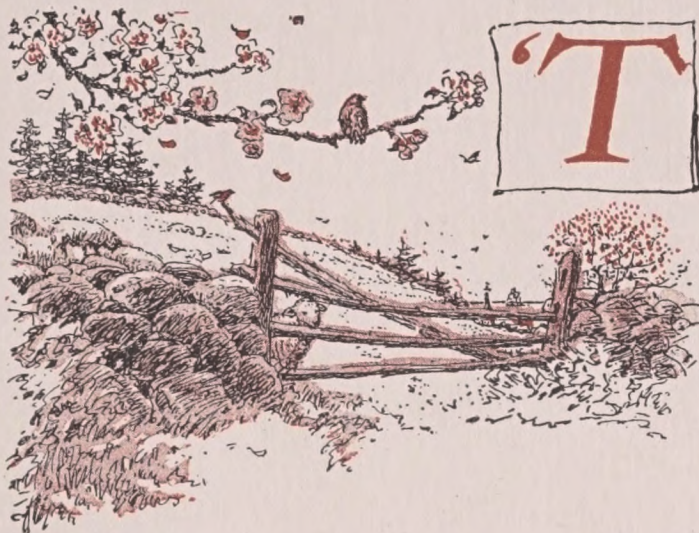
"Come see the rainbow in the east!" he called;
then naturally they all forgot the paper play and
rushed pell-mell to see!

*I don't know if they ever "gave" the "Fairies' April Fool."
Here are the "actors" though, and, so, you can,—right after school.*

PART EIGHT



*Most everybody, I should say,
Loves to go picnicking in May.*



T

WAS May! Best month of all the year! Birds, blossoms, sunshine, and—

But I must not get started on “A Song of Spring.”
Good land!

If I once did—I must admit that I came pretty near—

About this May-time picnic you perhaps would never hear.

Now Tubby's birthday came the twenty-first of that fine month.

He sometimes wondered why it wasn't called the twenty-wonh.
They'd made the cake the day before (Grandaunt makes “Sun Cake”^{*} still)
And planned a birthday picnic up on nearby Orchard Hill.
Of course besides the birthday cake they'd take a lovely pie,
Doughnuts and cheese and homemade bread, and even eggs to fry.
They often went to Orchard Hill for picnics in the spring—
A pleasant place—old apple trees with blossoms fluttering;
And from the ridge above a view of town and distant bay
Where full-rigged ships looked like small toys, they were so far away.

^{*} Sun Cake's a kind of fancy cake you seldom see nowadays
In yellow frosting over white is drawn a sun with rays.



The "twenty-won'th" dawned crystal clear, a perfect day to go,
As Uncle Nat had prophesied. He always seemed to know.
Even the Baby was to go with them a-picnicking.
I've noticed babies kick their heels for joy, like lambs,
in spring.

Said Dan, "Let's take the pony: she can be our 'pack
horse,' and

We'll call the ridge of Orchard Hill the Rocky Moun-
tains grand."

(All children, in this country, then were
playing "pioneer,"

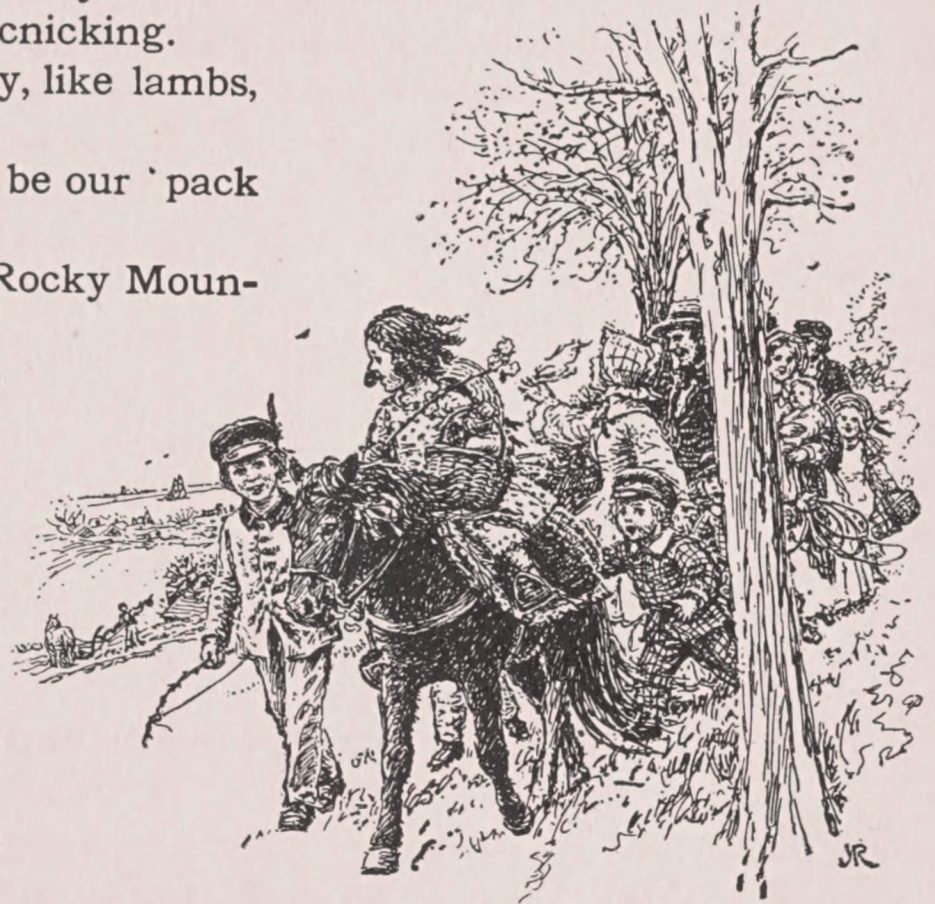
For men by thousands, hunting gold,
were going West each year.)

The Hill was really very near, say, half a
mile, about—

But somehow picnics always are so late
in starting out

That by the time they got there it was
nearly noon, and so

They right away looked for a place to set the table. "Oh,
Do see this lovely grassy mound beneath the apple tree,
It's just the place," said Aunt. Soon all were busy as could be—
Excepting Tubby: he was not the kind to want to shirk,





But on his birthday all agreed he should do no real work.
So he went off "to hunt for gold" while waiting for the feast.
And found quartz crystals. Di'monds rare they seemed, to him at least.
'Twas in the big sheep pasture just above the orchard that
He found these treasures, which he carried proudly in his hat;
Just as he started back to show his di'monds to the rest
A flock of sheep drew near. Dear, dear! Right here must be confessed
That Tubby *was afraid of sheep!* He'd once been chased, you see,
By an old ram. Even a lamb now made him want to flee.

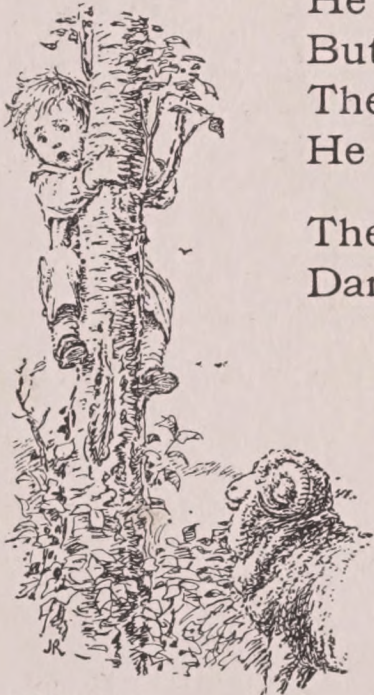
He dropped his hat and wildly ran, and howled, I grieve to say,
But you must please remember he was only six that day.
The dog heard Tubby from afar and to the rescue flew,
He made those sheep run 'most a mile—seemed to enjoy it, too,

The picnic was a grand success! Down by the old stone wall
Dan built a fire to fry the eggs. (They'd bought a "spider" small.)

*That fire made the children feel
As if they all were campers real.*

Dear me, how *good* things taste out-doors! Even
the pony, Dot,
Seemed to just really smack her lips over the oats
she got.

Tubby, despite his former fright, ate better than
the best.



He'd once
been chased.





What quantities of cake and pie small
stomachs can digest!

That afternoon when tired of the "Wild
West" games they played,
The children joined the
grown-ups, who were sit-
ting in the shade.

All but their father; long be-
fore he had been called
away—

A doctor never is allowed a
real whole holiday.

They all begged Uncle Nat
to dance his famous
"Bos'n's reel":



How good things taste
outdoors!



He showed the children how 'twas done on nimble toe and
heel.

Ez True had brought his flute along. Yes, he was there,
you see

He was a-courting Auntie Fan—fine fellow, yes, siree!
It must have been a sight to see the children hopping round
With shout and squeal to learn the reel. They fairly
shook the ground.



Then Auntie showed them the Quadrille, and later she and Ez
Went for a stroll up to the Knoll, and Great-Aunt Prudence says,
"Maybe it was the soft spring air, 'twas real sweetheartin' weather,"
But, anyhow, that handsome pair came back at last. Together
They stood, the petals drifting down upon them from the tree,
And Ezra said, proud, blushing red, "Fan says she'll marry me!"

*And Mother Smiley used to say,
"Ez was the one 'found gold' that day."*



PART NINE



*Aunt Fannie marries Ezra True.
I do like wedding cake. Don't you?*



UNT Fan “became a bride” in June, and Great-Aunt Prue tells me,

“That was the nicest wedding you would ever want to see!”

For days before the Big Event “there wasn’t hardly time,”

As someone said, “to wind the clock,” and sleeping seemed a crime.

Aunt Fan and Mother Smiley’d sew all day and half the night,

And Uncle once to Father said, “Dan’l, it isn’t right. Those women-folks might just take time to bake a pot o’ beans:

We can’t eat clothes and furbelows or live on bombazines!”

The Children—that is all except dear one-year-old Wee Wee—
With little homemade wedding gifts were busy as could be.
Prue, who could use a needle ’most as well as Mother, made
An apron “in the latest style”; ’twas blue, a pretty shade.
Dan whittled two big stirring spoons and Uncle showed him how
To scrape them smooth with broken glass. One’s in our kitchen now.



Why, even Tubby and the Twins their contributions made,
They picked sweet fern for pillows Janey'd stitched, with Mother's aid.

The young folks spent the afternoon before the wedding day
In making a long daisy chain—a beauty, too, they say.

This was to decorate, you see, the stair rail and the hall.

(Great-Aunt's told me so many times, I seem to see it all.)

The parlor doors' wide opening an arch of daisies spanned:



Beneath this to be married Aunty Fan and Ez would stand.

So 'twas a bustling household as you all can plainly see,

“Almost like just 'fore Christmas!” Janey Ann said happily.

The wedding day was wonderful from sparkling, dewy dawn

Till evening shadows lengthened from the elms upon the lawn.

The rambler roses never'd seemed so fragrant or so fair,

Birds sang in the big friendly trees, June's sweetness filled the air.

The Smiley Family was astir, of course, at early light—

Before the guests arrived they had to see that all looked right.



(I quite agree with Janey Ann, who used to say, "I do
Just love to get up early when the world is spick-span new!")



Good Gramp an' Gran'ma Smiley were, I think, the first
to come,

And soon with gay, excited sounds the house began to hum.
Folks kept a-coming thick and fast in phaeton or "shay"—
All old friends dear from far and near—the fine old-
fashioned way.

Old Parson Stearns arrived, and o'er the crowd-
ed, flowery room

There fell a sort of rustling hush. The poor per-
spiring groom

Stood blushing 'neath the daisy arch; but no one
looked at him.

"See! *Here she comes*," the whisper hums, and many eyes grow dim.
Soft radiance of purest white, blossom and filmy veil,
She leans on Doctor Smiley's arm—the Twins set up a wail!!
I hardly blame them. They'd been squeezed behind fat Mrs. Hall,
That's why the dears complained in tears, "*We can't see Aunt at all.*"
Even the nervous bridegroom grinned; *some* laughed, I grieve to say;
But, after all, most weddings are too solemn anyway.



Well, then the Parson went to work, and soon "the knot was tied."
Ez kissed Aunt Fan—now Mrs. True, with tenderness and pride.



Then everybody crowded close to wish the handsome pair
Prosperity and happiness and every prospect fair.
Even the dog, who'd wriggled in, jumped up and "kissed the bride"!
Oh, what a laugh, what merry chaff came then from every side!



Old "Gramp" said, "Now, when I was young we always formed a ring
And danced about the bride and groom; 'twas called the Bridal Swing."
No sooner said than done. All trooped out to the lawn to dance
Or to look on (there were a few, perhaps, too old to prance).
Tricks tore about and barked for joy, "egged on" no doubt, by Dan,



And from the open window Poll cried, "Go it, Sairy Ann!"

"Here comes the cake and lemonade and sandwiches." Of course
It isn't hard to guess that *that* was Tubby's whisper hoarse.



All sat in groups beneath the elms, and Mother, Janey Ann

And Prudence passed the things about—'twas Auntie's picnic plan.

The Baby got a tiny taste of wedding cake—I fear

'Twas Uncle Nat who gave her that—when Mother wasn't near.

After the lunch folks strolled or sat and “passed the time o' day.”

They must have made in sun-flecked shade a pretty picture. Eh?

“Well, bless my soul, it's three o'clock!” said Uncle, “Stage time, too.” And sure enough “Ed Fox's coach” was coming into view.

It soon drew up before the gate. “Shh—back, Nance! *Whoooa* there, Nell!! The time had come (it always does somehow) to say farewell. Down the front path “the couple” came: Fan dressed in pink and gray Ez carried a new carpet bag with scarlet roses gay!

(They'd told nobody where they were to spend their honeymoon, Perhaps 'twas to Niagara Falls they went—that long-gone June.) Father brought down Fan's cow-hide trunk all studded with brass nails, The driver put it up on top. The horses switched their tails.

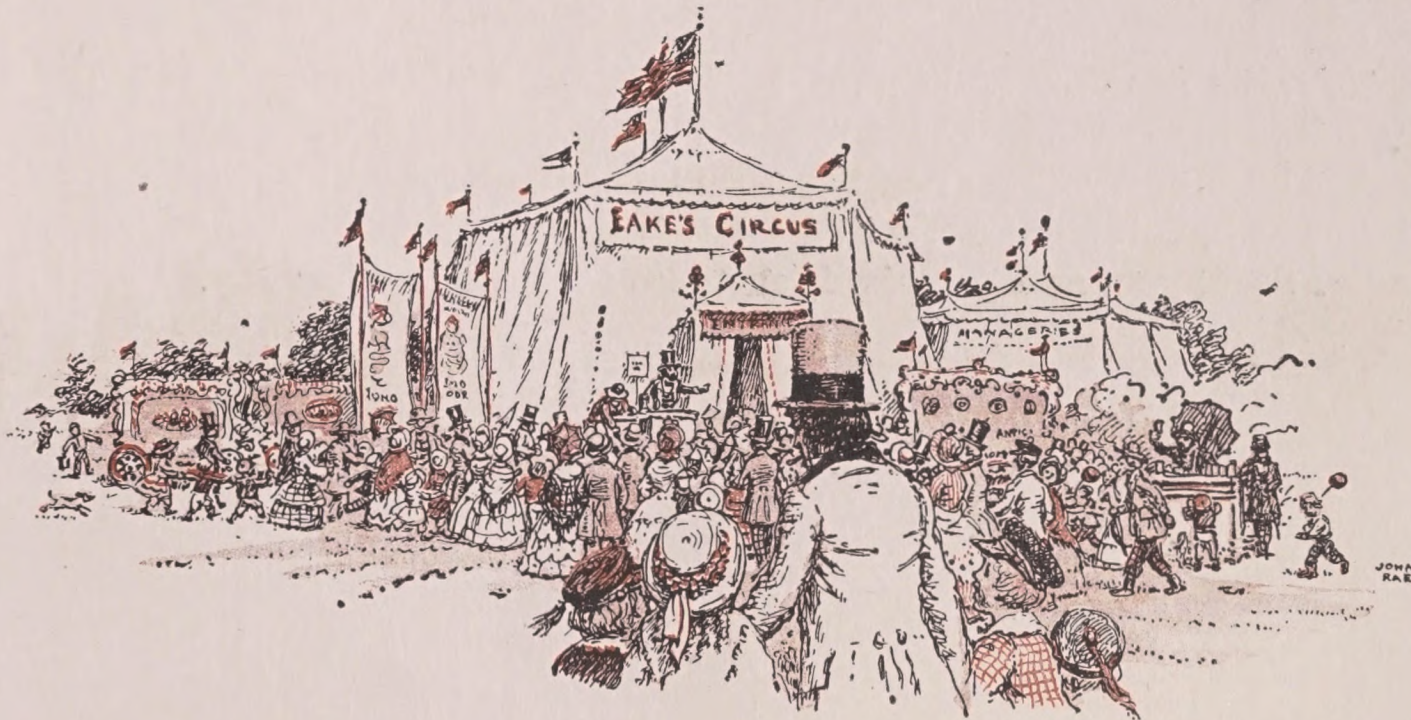


And then before they realized the old red coach was gone!
Why even Dan forgot he'd planned to tie a cow bell on.
All stood there waving handkerchiefs—and moist was many an eye—
“Good-bye,” they shouted, and again, “Good-bye,”—“Good-bye,”—“Good-bye.”





SOME time, perhaps, I'll tell about what they all did that summer.
How they spent Independence Day: How on the "Dora Plummer"—
A schooner small—the children took a jolly little cruise,
With Uncle Nat as skipper, and I think it will amuse
You probably to hear about what happened Circus Day
When Dan—but I'll not tell that now; it's too late anyway.
I will though, sometime, and about their stay at Grandpa's: (My!





What fun they had there "haying time" that wonderful July.)
The many other things they did while visiting the Farm;
The thunderstorm and fire with its wild midnight alarm!
The opening of School and then—but why go on this way?
I'll tell you, as I promised, all these tales some other day.

Bed — time



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